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Radio & TV

by Joan Irwin

Visual tricks just detract from vital Galbraith series

Fascination conquered frustration Monday night as I watched the first of the 13 chapters of John Kenneth Galbraith's 'The Age of Uncertainty' on CBC-TV.

It's understandable enough that the BBC producer of this British-Canadian-American co-production would be acutely aware that economics is a complex, non-visual subject only dimly grasped by most members of the public. It's equally apparent that the treatment had to be carefully planned to attract and hold a TV audience unaccustomed to extended concentration on any single subject.

But the frustrating flaw in this exceedingly important series, if one is to judge by the opening episode, is that the zeal to render the subject visible has resulted in a distracting array of gimmicks, graphics, and gewgaws.

Galbraith himself is as lucid and compelling a guide through the economic maze as one could wish. His presence is strong and relaxed — less demanding than that of the late Jacob Bronowski ('The Ascent of Man') and considerably less austere than that of Kenneth Clark ('Civilisation'). His narration flows with easy grace, and his dry wit is a delight.

Surely a man so skilled in communicating his subject has no need of such aids as cardboard cutouts and actors dressed up as workers, landlords and kings. There's enough visual diversity in seeing Galbraith discussing the physiocrat theory in a French market, the Scottish clearances in the Cheviot hills, and the law of falling wages in the deserted London docks of the 1800s.

The error was to assume that the audience wouldn't sit still for straightforward explanations from Galbraith accompanied, when necessary, by simple illustrations of the points he was making. Many of the illustrative devices used in the program served only to divert one's mind from Galbraith's words and thus to break flow of his thought.

TV audiences are strongly conditioned to a tight blend of image and sound. In situation comedy, action series and documentaries the image is often more important than the sound, so we expect images to augment, or at least complement, what we're hearing.

In Monday's edition of 'The Age of Uncertainty' many of the visual components were mere window-dressing — related to the script but adding nothing to it — quite unlike the intimate relationship between image and narration of the 'Civilisation' and 'Ascent of Man' series.

There's no question, however, that this is a ground-breaking series on a vital topic never before tackled at such length on TV. Great areas of human thought and achievement have been avoided by TV on the ground that they don't lend themselves to a visual treatment except in the "talking head" style.

'The Age of Uncertainty' should prove that a talking head is eminently acceptable if it happens to belong to Galbraith, and that the compulsion to occupy the eye with other things is not always justified. It may be that there will be fewer distractions in ensuing programs. Whether there are or not, the opportunity to share Galbraith's views of international economics is not to be missed.

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The results of the most recent survey of the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM) are out, and the CBC-TV news and current affairs department is rejoicing.

The national news, 'Marketplace', 'Ombudsman', 'the fifth estate', 'Newsmagazine', and 'Man Alive' have all gained audience, with 'Marketplace' showing an impressive increase of 400,000 viewers since the last BBM rating.

On the full CBC-TV network (not the more restricted common coverage area of CBC-TV and CTV competition) 'The National' reached 1,450,000 viewers, 'Marketplace' 1,849,000, 'the fifth estate' 1,513,000, 'Ombudsman' 1,443,000, 'Newsmagazine' 1,214,000, and 'Man Alive' 985,000.

'90 Minutes Live' with Peter Gzowski managed an audience of 250,000 — an acceptable figure at that late hour but not what had been expected and somewhat less than the CBC's own surveys had shown.

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Tonight at 6:30 p.m. CBMT's documentary unit examines the rental and real estate situation in Montreal in a program called 'No Vacancy - House for Sale'... At 8 p.m. channel 10 has a Robert Charlebois special filmed in Morin Heights, France, Guadeloupe and Cuba... At 9 p.m. there's a CBC-TV documentary on the westward movement in Canada called 'Search for the Western Sea'... And at 9:30 p.m. Harry Rasky's glorious 'Homage to Chagall' will fill your screen with color and your soul with joy.

The final episode of 'Upstairs Downstairs' will be seen tomorrow night at 9 p.m. on CBC-TV, and coverage of the federal budget begins at 10 p.m. on CBC English and French networks.

Winchester plans April start for 'new freedom' tour of U.S.

Spotlight

by Juan Rodriguez

Jesse Winchester's bandwagon return to the United States — spurred by President Jimmy Carter's pardon of draft evaders — will begin in Burlington, Vt., on April 21 and stretch over three months.

The acclaimed singer-songwriter ('Brand New Tennessee Waltz,' 'Yankee Lady,' etc.) will be playing to more than 100,000 fans curious to see Winchester in person. He had hasn't played in his own country since his anti-Vietnam war stand brought him to Montreal in 1967, a move that came before his career took off.

Winchester is currently in Barbados, resting up for his climactic return, which will take him to New York (Bottom Line club, May 4 to 7), Los Angeles (Roxy Theatre, June 2 to 5), Texas, Chicago, Memphis, Denver, Knoxville, and points between.

The tour follows the release April 29 of his fifth album, entitled 'Nothing But A Breeze,' produced by Brian Ahearne (of Emmy Lou Harris and Anne Murray fame).

Sums up feeling

"The title song really sums up Jesse's feeling of 'new freedom,' for want of a better phrase," says his manager, Arnie Naiditch. "It's got a typical Winchester truism in it: 'I want to live with my feet in Dixie and my head in the cold North'. He's very excited, but he's going to try to be low-key in coping with the response he gets."

Winchester's success is due, in part, to the hard work of Naiditch, who used to run the old Karma Coffee House and thought of reviving Winchester's stillborn career as a "personal challenge".

He had been in negotiations with officials in Memphis (where Winchester grew up) and Washington many months before the pardon was announced. He'd kept Winchester and his blossoming new country-rock band busy over the past two years, to the point where they are a tight, slick an sensitively attuned group of musicians.

The pardon also meant cancellation of an Australian and New Zealand tour. "We felt we had to play to our new markets," Naiditch says diplomatically.

Winchester is the subject of a 'People' magazine profile this week, while on the weekend television program 'NBC Weekend' he has been accorded a 20-minute report.

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Montreal's weak night club scene was given a heavy blow when the Esquire Show Bar closed down more than three years ago, after its liquor licence had been revoked by the province.

The Esquire's doors will reopen April 12 under a different moniker, Milord. The popular Quebecois heavy rock act Offenbach will perform the first of a series of six-night stints that are to stress variety.

Jazz-rock star George Duke follows, as well as rhythm 'n' blues singer Arthur Prysock, the Canadian rock group Garfiedl and singer Bim, and — just about confirmed — Bob Dylan's favorite violinist, Scarlett Rivera.

The manager of the new club is local businessman Arthur Dalfen, who has presented the occasional show at Place des Arts. He promises reasonable prices on alcoholic beverages.

Heavy Rumor Department: The Olympic stadium is a natural for rock extravaganzas and the first one is in the works, to star two British cosmic-rock groups revered by fanatical Quebecois rock fans: Pink Floyd and Supertramp. This duo is generally considered strong ebough to pull in a crowd of 60,000, sometime during the summer.

If the deal falls through, we may see Supertramp play more than one night at the Forum, in the midst of a 1977 world tour that revolves around a forthcoming album entitled 'Even in the Quietest Moments.'

It was the fervent Quebecois reaction — both groups are revered by the pequiste rock generation — that launched the American careers of Pink Floyd and Supertramp.

JESSE WINCHESTER
Can go home at last

Dance's bright new star too shy to shine in public

By LINDE HOWE-BECK
of The Gazette

OSCAR ARAIZ
Formless outside studio

Oscar Araiz, the youngish (36) Argentinian nonconformist choreographer whose works have been heralded on three continents, sank his boneless body into the depths of the plush couch and tried to disappear.

Not at all the sort of behavior one would expect of a world-renowned figure, creator of some of the most unusual ballets performed today.

Araiz came to Montreal last week to teach his ballet 'Femmes' to La Compagnie de danse Eddy Toussaint and to catch up with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, which performs here tomorrow through Saturday. He will travel with the Winnipeg troupe to Toronto and Winnipeg while introducing to it a new dance, 'Ebony Concert' with Stravinsky music.

The RWB, which takes credit for introducing Araiz to Canadá in 1974, will perform three of his works at Salle Wilfrid Pelletier.

No interviews

Eddy Toussaint had warned that Araiz was extremely shy of journalists. Formal interviews were out of the question, but he was available briefly at a small party given by dancers.

In that setting Araiz was a shadow hung with shapeless clothes who sat with white cotton ankles crossed and black lace-up shoes gleaming. In the rehearsal room he's transformed: He grows in stature, his compact frame becomes well muscled instead of rubbery and he's both sensuous and sensitive to everyone.

But always, when he talks, he eyes his inquisitor sleepily, carefully, and searches in smooth Spanish-sprinkled French or tenacious English for the same clarity in conversation that he achieves in dance.

"I change from dramatics to funny scenes with different themes and different music — Tchaikowsky to Pink Floyd." Araiz, who studied both modern dance and ballet at the age of 17 and created his first choreography a year later, calls himself a "very free choreographer" and then grins sheepishly, admitting, "I am not very pure."

Critics have noted his musicality (he draws inspiration from both music and painting) and his eclecticism (he plucks ideas from ballet, modern and jazz and mixes them into his own style) and have gushed over his works on the Mahler fourth and fifth symphonies in particular.

Araiz says he has a special affinity for the turn-of-the-century Austrian composer, whom he discovered through concert music and biographies.

"I try to reflect his thoughts and ideas in my ballets — they're my ideas too."

Less than three years ago, the intense Argentinian was little known outside his own country and Brazil.

In Buenos Aires he had had a kind of on-again, off-again company which at one time expanded to include 25 dancers — the same size as the RWB.

In 1974, during the Winnipeg group's South American tour, artistic director Arnold Spohr attended a performance of Araiz's company and was so impressed he immediately invited the choreographer to Canada.

Araiz's 'Adagietto,' 'Family Scenes' and 'Magnificat' quickly found their way into the Winnipeg repertoire. They are among the works the company will perform in Montreal.

Araiz's ballets have been presented by the ballet of the Bonn (Germany) Stadtheatre, the Dutch National Ballet, and the Ballet Contemporain d'Angiers (France). This month he has been working at the Paris Opera at the invitation of its new artistic director, Violette Verdy, former principal dancer with the New York City Ballet.

All this requires a good deal of jetting around, which very definitely is not the quiet choreographer's style.

"Yes, it's terrible to go from country to country. My relationship with persons — with dancers — is very important. When I begin to work with a new company I need a period of time to get to know them and for them to get to know me."

He stopped speaking and plunged into one of his typical long pauses before releasing a torrent of words.

"In Winnipeg I know the people better each year. We can begin to work immediately."

He admits to favorites among dance systems (José Limon) and among dancers: "Bonnie (Wycoff of the RWB) is my weakness. She can do anything, any role." Wycoff danced his 'Rite of Spring' here last July.

Araiz has just turned down the position of artistic director for the Colon Opera Company in Buenos Aires because he feels it would be difficult to change the company's traditional opera ballet outlook. He prefers North American-trained dancers for their speed, energy and spirit and hopes some day to establish his own company of no more than 20 dancers in a small, possibly American, community.

He's reluctant to discuss his works. "Wait. You will see. I don't like to talk about my work. I don't have faith in words — I believe more in movement. Words can change some things."

His 'Femmes' will be performed by Toussaint's company May 25 to 28 at Theatre Maisonneuve.

Eagles' edge blunted in concert

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
of The Gazette

The Eagles are one of the most technically perfect recording groups around. The Californian quintet uses a tasty touch and tight sense of harmonies to put across a laid-back narcissism in matters relating to sex and love.

They are the ultimate drugstore cowboys whose every recorded sound carries such an edge that they effectively suck the listener into their romance-on-the-road lifestyle.

In concert, however, as at last night's show at the Forum before 18,000 fans, the Eagles are slightly disappointing. Instead of retaining their recorded edge, as might have been expected, the group sounded lackadaisical.

The Eagles have so many good songs that've become hits — the current 'Hotel California,' 'New Kid in Town,' 'Lyin' Eyes,' 'One of These Nights,' 'Desperado,' 'Take It To the Limit' — that the recognition of these songs provides most of the spark behind the show. The laid-back dudes themselves are not exciting performers.

The songs would start off very well, because the tunes usually revolve around some clever, catchy hook or theme. But after carving the opening signatures, much of the rest sounded like nothing more than clockwork.

Naturally, the group was tight — the harmonies and little-boy-lost oohs and ahhs came across well throughout the arena and the guitars duelled faithfully throughout — but didn't sound as good as on record.

The st ing of the guitar solo on the recorded 'One of These Nights' was reduced to nothing more than just another solo in performance. In their efforts to remain cool and collected as their image, the Eagles tended to lean upon their reputation without really seem to exert themselves with a sense of conviction about their songs. On record, they are able, through overdubbing, to attain perfection but in concert they are a shadow.

Of course, the Eagles' product is good enough to put across a decent quality-conscious type of music, but their performance is not devoted enough to stir souls — other than those of their fans.

The opening set was performed by Jimmy Buffet and his band. The country-rock singer-guitarist has less of a macho image than the Eagles but he was able to diversify his attack more effectively. Some of his performance revolved around lickety-split musicianship — the group is salty and jumpy — as well as a fine lonesome sense of lyricism.

Phillips is forgiven for show's late start

By NIGHTHAWK
for The Gazette

The Rising Sun was packed last night with an expectant crowd for the first set of Esther Phillips's group, which is here until April 3.

At 10 p.m. or so, a half-hour behind schedule, the musicians started their sound test and for 15 minutes, the crowd followed patiently. Still no sign of Esther.

The quartet started playing a funky rhythm 'n' blues disco beat, up-tempo, and the audience settled back with the familiar sounds.

the musicians gave us a second tune, and a third, and by this time, things were beginning to jell musically, but it was still strewn with unclean breaks and uncertain tempos.

Esther had walked in, almost unnoticed, around 10:40 and by 11 p.m. there were some hollers from the audience "Esther . . . Est r. . ."

The Lady obliged then, making her way to the stage in a very revealing see-through caftan, fingers laden with rings, gesturing to acknowledge the applause.

A couple of tunes from her latest album, 'Capricorn Princess,' received whoops and hollers. The sound system didn't deliver the lyrics very clearly but she has such amazing voice control that the audience was in the palm of her hand, anyway.

By now the band was cookin'. With 'Fever,' she turned to the rough, tough nasal voice full of sexy tiger growls.

When we left, she was embarking on one of her famous talking blues and the audience had fallen under her spell.

Cambridge Choir at home with widely varied works

By DANE LANKEN
of The Gazette

The Cambridge University Chamber Choir, in the midst of a three-week tour of North America, made two stops in Montreal this week, Monday noon at Christ Church Cathedral, and last night at St. Matthias Church in Westmount.

Last night's concert, which was taped by the CBC for later broadcast, included selections from some 800 years of choral composition, from 13th century "partsongs" to contemporary settings of William Blake poems.

The choir, founded eight years ago by its director Richard Marlow, distinguished itself with its fine sense of tone color and crisp phrasing. It seemed equally at home in the variety of styles and moods it undertook.

It sustained a careful weaving of the fragile vocal threads in Purcell's anthem 'Hear My Prayer,' bounced through Lassus' cheery chanson 'Matona, mia cara,' and caught the strange dischordant flavor of Messiaen's motet 'O sacrum convivium.'

Perhaps the highlight of the evening came in the choir's reading of the moving Brahms' motet 'Wo ist ein so selig Volk,' in which it displayed something approaching gusto in the dramatic passages.

The choir could do, if one would find fault, with a greater sense of humor and lightness, and perhaps some of the sopranos could tone down at some spots, but in all this was an impressive display of quality in an all to explored field.

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